

STATE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract - Globalization has overwhelmed the political, economic, and cultural arenas for the last few decades. It is a Western attempt that seeks to cause serious impact on the concept and sovereignty of the national-state, leading to sectarian and ethnic conflicts and dangerous dividing as well. This impact is considered a direct threat to the national security of any state, the Arab ones in particular. With the advent of this new phenomenon, many challenges have risen to the surface. This paper, therefore, attempts to explore the challenges globalization has created, especially in the Arab region. Of particular importance, it sheds light on specific challenges including penetration of state sovereignty, curtailment of its national role, promoting tribal loyalty, and weakening national loyalty. Furthermore, the paper suggests steps to encounter or alleviate the consequences of these challenges such as strengthening the role of the state and promoting the principle of citizenship.

Keywords - Sovereignty, National-state, Challenges, Citizenship, Tribe, Arab countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last century, the world has witnessed a series of international changes, a notably new phenomenon in its naming and consequences at all levels called globalization. Globalization was a purely economic phenomenon at first, but it soon encompassed other political, cultural, and intellectual aspects. The United States is considered the cradle of globalization, and soon it attempted to spread this phenomenon to the third world countries particularly the Arab and Islamic ones. The present era has then experienced a new challenge fostered and aided by huge and rapid scientific and technological advancement, and the Arab countries have ever since undergone complex aspects of this novelty.

The term globalization has spiralled and begun to appear in political speeches and the multimedia. Its impact is featured by the ability to curtail the role of states, and to turn the world into a small village. Due to the technological advancement and communication, this transformation has threatened the national identity, cultural heritage, distinctive culture of countries, and nations around the world. The threats posed by globalization are discussed in two main points followed by two means of confrontation, and the paper arrives to a conclusion section at the end.

II. THREATS

2.1. *Penetration of State Sovereignty and Curtailment of its National Role*

Since globalization emerged, the importance of national sovereignty in many third world countries has tended to shrink despite the fixed ruling governments and their dominance over their peoples (Majid, 2002:39). The social and economic growth has crossed boundaries and the national sovereignty

has lost its status. The process has been taking place rapidly, supported by the enormous technological revolution the world has witnessed in the last few decades. This revolution has been invested by global companies to control the economies of the developing countries. Weiss (1997:13) admits that “financial globalization is commonly identified as the factor undermining governments’ ability to practice effective macroeconomic management.” Drawing on the Chinese example, Zheng (2004) claims that globalization has posed challenges but provided opportunities to all countries, especially developing ones. The whole process has been at the expense of the state's centralization and powers in the internal and external arenas.

In recent decades, the IT revolution has dramatically affected the nature of the functions governments usually perform (Mohammed, 2008:65). Most writings on the information revolution evidently reveal that globalization's basic premise is based on the attempt to curtail the government's role in public life, and occasionally to call for total abandonment of such role. On this basis, voices calling for curtailing the government's role have increasingly grown louder. At the external level, most Arab governments have failed to control the type and size of information flowing to their people. It is also very difficult to evaluate the damage this flow can cause with regard to attitudes and ideologies, and how far it affects the degree of allegiance to the Arab political systems and the state. At the domestic level, some Arab governments have encountered risks of disintegration, and dividing and internal problems of the national unity.

Undoubtedly, the developing societies, including the Arab ones, will be in the victims of globalization. Countries of the South are the most affected (Siddiqi, 2008:124) because of (1) the weakness and fragility of the state apparatus, (2) the absence of well-founded institutions in many areas, (3) the exacerbated economic and social problems, (4) the

decrease in the state's capabilities to cope with changes, and (5) the weakness in the potential and regional cooperation frameworks between them. On the other hand, the world powers seek to control and direct globalization according to their own interests.

During its occupation of Iraq in 2003, the US attempted to demonstrate that the Arab national state was unable to carry out its duties. World TVs released looting photos of Baghdad museums and libraries and burning symbols of its sovereignty (Wannas, 2006:98). This American media campaign of publicizing vandalism acts was a clear message to the world: This nation (Iraq) with its deep-rooted cultural heritage is no more than a fragmented and disintegrated nation, with no constraints. This idea was supported by the destruction of Iraq's symbols, gains, museums, and materialistic and symbolic achievements. The US has, in fact, promoted that many international problems have domestic roots, and therefore should be tackled at that level—within nations rather than between them (Slaughter, 2004).

The aspects of disintegration have gone so far in many developing countries as the cases in Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Somalia, and some other countries in central Africa. These countries were riddled with weaknesses in their various institutional structures and economic bases, which could help penetrate their sovereignty (Gharbi, 2008:57). Accordingly, the fragile sovereignty of these states would pose no obstacle for globalization. The phenomenon is in favor of the developed democratic countries as long as they do not confront coherent and well-established blocks. Developing countries do not support democracy, and they hold no weight to human rights, and this is smartly exploited by major Western countries especially the United States. The United States can then extend their influence and serve their interests, and more importantly pass on their projects, for example, the Greater Middle East project¹.

A state's undivided sovereignty means that the state is not subjected to any superior authority or an imposed external or internal will. The World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, violates national sovereignty and limits the states' freedom of acting according to their interests and perceptions. The organization also imposes certain commercial and financial standards on the pretext of trade liberalization and opening markets for movement of goods, services, and money (Abu Jodeh, 2008:115).

The US gave undivided attention for spreading democracy, political pluralism, and respect for human

rights in the Arab countries, which might affect the state's internal affairs. Yasin (1998:18-19) argues that the US's attempts further allowed civil society organizations to act as a watchdog on the national state's actions, and to prevent violating values imposed or advocated by globalization. Otherwise, the national-state would be inevitably classified among counties who violate human and civil rights. The case may develop in future, which can justify a US military intervention, aiming to eliminate the political system of that state. Additionally, globalization deals directly with national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) backstage, without going through the state's channels. These organizations mostly turn into a bridge for global (NGOs) such as USAID and other organizations that assist and fund national ones (Mansour, 2004:128).

With declining sovereignty especially after terrorism emerged, security has become an important issue to all states. Collective fighting of terrorism became an urgent necessity, leading many researchers to believe that the national-state has become an acting local authority for the international system because it cannot fulfill the job independently (Gharbi, 2008:60).

2.2 Promoting Tribal Loyalty and Weakening National Loyalty

Some Arab countries are closely linked to tribe, and some states—such as Gulf States, Jordan, and Yemen—have already evolved depending on the tribal structure. In other countries, the tribal influence is still significant depending on their proportion of the total population such as in Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Sudan, and Egypt (Assyyid, online). Tribal affiliations are still deep-rooted, despite the major changes witnessed by the young states in the region.

Due to globalization, differences increased, discrepancies emerged, narrow cultural identity is called for, and political independence escalated—all culminating to small political entities, a totally rejected situation by all states. Tanir (2010) argues that globalization, which implies an end of differences and bridging gaps, has been a leading instigator of separatist attitudes. Since the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf region, the tribe has yielded up its role to civilian rule. Al-Bishr (2008:84) believes that the tribe has become merely a tool for protecting and saving the citizens' life; but the tribe has become more noticeable in light of globalization. She states that “loyalty to tribe has surpassed loyalty to homeland.” Accordingly, belonging to tribe overwhelmed feelings of citizenship and their link to the political entity of the state (Mus'ad, 2010:34).

The dangers of globalization have emerged in the coercive change of Arab societies in the political and social aspects. Al-Ubaidi (2009:175) views the process through the severe exaggeration of promoting new mechanisms, such as minorities self-determination right, ethnic nation, and ethno-

¹The Greater Middle East is a term launched by the former US President, George W. Bush's administration, on a wide area encompassing the entire Arab world, in addition to Turkey, Israel, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the American claims, it is a comprehensive project that seeks to promote political, economic and social reform in that region. See: Miloudbn, (2008 :56).

democratic. The attempt to give some minorities an internationally recognized special status will eventually increase the risk of fragmentation and collapse in countries encompassing diverse communities. The US administration often pretends to sympathize with the minorities in the third world countries and simultaneously incites them, though indirectly, to rebel or demand to separate in order to lift oppression (Majthoub, 2009:23).

By doing this, the US can intervene in these countries under the pretext of protecting the oppressed minorities and enabling them to exercise their freedom and self-determination. Lebanon represents a classic example of the predominance of sects and their institutions on the state. Today, the Lebanese scene involves much sectarian lining up, where sects are positioned between individuals and the state. The Lebanese have linked themselves to their sects in terms of political attitudes since the twentieth century. This link, according to Ghazal (2008: 194), was devoted by Lebanon's constitution and subsequent conventions. It makes it impossible to have a true citizenship governed by general law, with confusion in equality in rights and duties in particular. Ghazal adds that "the Lebanese are inevitably born sectarian, and they live accordingly. They have fought struggles at different stages for predominance of state at the expense of sects, but successive civil wars, hot and cold ones, resulted in further domination of sects on the expense of state." In Lebanon, we can find no individuals nor communities. Sects are the only players in the arena, keeping citizens away of the political and social scene with absence of an integrated national society.

Although Egypt was classified among the most cohesive entities of the Arab states, the image has recently changed with the rise of political Islam and its Salafist and fundamentalist ideologies. The implications of this rise have been profound and had negative effects on the structure of Egyptian society and relations between its original components, resulting in tense relations between the Muslims and the Copts.

The seriousness of globalization will eventually lead to loud calls for affiliations and loyalties narrower than the state's general interest. Abdul-Hafiz (2005:63) attributes this negative attitude to three reasons:

1. The globalization's accompanying circumstances have spread liberal democracy, respecting human rights and the right to self-determination. These circumstances have helped remove previous barriers.
2. Under globalization, the weak presence and authority of state has fueled calls to narrow affiliations, which may have been repressed in earlier historical stages.
3. Massive exposure to media and cultural waves coming from the West carried values contrary to the values prevailing in some communities. Some groups have detected a threat to their privacy and cultural

identity, and this has made them cling to rudimentary and narrow affiliation, believing it can protect their own identity.

Obviously the Arab countries have not succeeded to maintain sovereign framing of the state, or to instill national identity among individuals. They have also failed to formulate the concept of citizenship, while others have succeeded since centuries. Reform and renewal movements, in the midst of mass coercive conversion and merger, adopted the idea of a rudimentary relation: An individual's relation is linked to tribe or sect instead of homeland or society. Consequently, the tribe contained the state, as no single Arab state celebrates a completely national allegiance. Khalil & Al-Rabi'e (2004:312) conclude that ethnicity, tribe, and regionalism have outweighed the concept of the Arab nation, and they represent a state of disintegration and conflict which is negatively reflected on the Arab state and cultural advancement.

III. MEANS OF CONFRONTATION

3.1. *Strengthening the State's Role*

Anderson (2001) argues that political globalization is a future project which makes way to an evolutionary subsequent stage of economic and cultural globalization. A world without political borders will not be automatic, or will occur at the same pace of a world without economic or cultural borders. Free movement of individuals, goods, services, ideas, and information across communities and continents, which took place during the nineties, led to decline in the absolute sovereignty. It also created the impression that the state is no longer necessary. However, Anderson seems optimistic when he assumes that not all aspects of sovereignty will vanish nor the state will end. Other optimistic researchers with similar perspectives include Baqir (1996:151), who contends that many aspects of sovereignty will survive and there will be no end of the state, and it is unlikely that a world government can replace the national-state and operate the world as one political, economic, cultural, and social unity. Thus recurrent information about the effects of globalization in the state's power is largely exaggerated. The state or its influence will not disappear or fade, and its ability to impose specific policies will remain active.

In coping with the effects of globalization on the sovereignty of the national-state, Arab countries are compelled to consider how to deal with this phenomenon. To this end, Al- Ubaidi (2009:172) suggests that functions, control, and authorities of the state should be constantly restructured in order to deal with the changing realities of the world. To do so, the state should set up international strategies and constraints to ensure effective management of increasing cross-border cases that appear regularly. Al-Utaibi also proposes that globalization should be dealt from an enlightening and critical perspective.

Globalization opens advantages in certain fields, and in exchange, there should be cautiousness for other disadvantages affecting the state and society. One step is to communicate with other nations in all areas raised by globalization, whether through government institutions or through civil society institutions, to benefit from their experiences.

The Arab region urgently needs a political and a new social contract governing the relations between the state and society. The contract will also affirm the sanctity of the right to a broad participation and reduction of the individual moods in ruling the state. There is also an urgent need for more transparency in the public money, wealth distribution, and completion of developmental options. To arrive to free political and economic decisions and enhanced sovereignty, Tabib (2005:215) believes that the Arab region should dispense with foreign armies, which implicitly occupy vital oil areas and waterways.

3.2. Promotion of the Principle of Citizenship

Because globalization has intensified sectarian and tribal conflicts, the notion of citizenship rises as a necessity to avoid the brink of civil and internal wars, and to confront the looming risks threatening the national unities of the Arab world (Hussein, 2010:28).

Encyclopedia Britannica defines citizenship as “the relation between a normal individual and a political society (state), in which the individual owes allegiance to the state by fulfilling his/her duties in exchange for receiving his/her full rights as a citizen without discrimination between him/her and other citizens.”

The state's duty is to serve justice, a basis of its legitimacy. The state is also responsible for achieving equality among citizens, whether they are a majority or a minority. Both have the same rights and duties, regardless of any other considerations. Under this legal and principled basis, Hammadi (2006:109) posits that the national state cannot be established and preserved unless on grounds of justice and equality among its citizens, despite their different religious, ethnic, social or economic affiliations.

Hussein (2010: 25) points out that the enhancement of citizenship spirit is “one of the most important weapons that can be recruited against globalization.” Thus, equality must be achieved without discrimination, exclusion, or favoritism. In this concern, Hussein claims that the right to naturalization in most of the Arab states does not lead to de facto equality in rights and duties; discrimination among citizens will still remain. But to develop the spirit of citizenship, all rights must be guaranteed: civil rights (equality before the law, freedom of opinion, thought and belief), political rights (participation in elections, joining parties, the right of assembly), and social rights (economic and social welfare, participation in cultural life, and ensuring education and job opportunities).

Moreover, the spirit of citizenship in the Arab society should be based on sympathy, synergy, and mutual loyalty. A cohesive society cannot evolve if loyalty of the individual is linked only to family, tribe, community, career, or the authority who serves his or her own interests. According to -Huroub (2001:96), loyalty falls apart and interests contradict because citizenship is not granted from an external source but is acquired like any other value of life.

Thus, democracy cannot be achieved in any society without citizens' conscious of the concept of citizenship in its twofold (duties and rights). Furthermore, it must be emphasized that citizenship can only be achieved in a democratic political system that respects human rights, protects dignity, and provides citizens with the necessities of a decent living (Al-Kutubi, 2008:97). Positive and active citizenship is an essential pillar of a democratic political system which unifies all people towards one target.

Civil society organizations also play a vital role in strengthening the spirit of citizenship to avoid the negative effects of globalization on Arab communities. In case of an authoritarian state, al-Ubaidi (2009:174) accounts on civil societies to help protect the rights and freedoms. He argues that the societies immunize individuals against the state's ascendancy on one hand, and fortify the state against violent social unrest on the other. Civil society institutions should embrace the energies of society, improve its efficiency and potential, and contribute to addressing the problems experienced by the Arab society.

CONCLUSION

It is fair to say that globalization is a Western attempt loaded with Western concepts especially that of American ones targeting a new world order. It is also a universal phenomenon with a long-term view covering even the remotest points in the world. This order is intended to establish a new regular edifice that works on circulating Western concepts throughout the world. This new system is different from the precedent traditional international systems, due to the absence of the absolute sovereignty of state in today's global order. It also aims to transform the world into an arena of competition serving the national interests of the great powers, primarily the US.

To sum up, the pursuit of tribal affiliation at the expense of citizenship spirit and belonging to the state poses a serious challenge to the communities of Arab states. The gravity of this challenge would be evident in the crises that the states might experience in future if solutions were not provided to mitigate the negative effects of the phenomenon that threatens the strength and unity of the state. The Arab communities, in light of the current international situation, are in dire need to understand and enhance

the true principle of citizenship, and therefore, civil society organizations can take the role to consolidate this principle in the hearts of individuals. Finally, a state of law should be established with entrenched foundations of democratic institutions.

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